



**METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION**

Joseph P. Bort MetroCenter
101 Eighth Street
Oakland, CA 94607-4700
Tel: 510.464.7700
TDD/TTY: 510.464.7769
Fax: 510.464.7848

Memorandum

TO: Bay Bridge Design Task Force

DATE: April 26, 2000

FR: Steve Heminger

RE: East span update

At the request of Task Force Chair Mary King, I enclose a recent letter from the Chair of the California Transportation Commission to the U.S. Navy about the ongoing impasse over construction of the new east span of the Bay Bridge.

As you know, last September the Navy finally gave Caltrans permission to conduct geotechnical drilling on Yerba Buena Island (YBI) for the northern alignment bridge. The drilling has been completed and Caltrans expects to receive the 85% design plans on the suspension portion of the new bridge this summer. The 85% completion design plans for the viaduct portion of the new bridge were received in February 2000.

However, the delay caused by the Navy in withholding the drilling permit approval amounted to about one year and added \$50 million in project cost escalation (3% per year escalation on the \$1.5 billion total project cost). Since September 1999, the Navy has engaged in another round of stall tactics on release of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the east span project. We have entered the seventh month of the current FEIS-related delay, which means another \$25 million in cost escalation -- or a total of \$75 million in cost escalation to date.

As you may have seen reported in the press today, in an effort to resolve this latest impasse, the Federal Highway Administration (which is co-lead agency on the FEIS with Caltrans) has asked the Army Corps of Engineers to conduct an independent assessment of two questions: (1) does it make more sense to retrofit the east span or replace it with a new bridge? and (2) is the Caltrans replacement design for the new east span seismically safe? This study is estimated to take 3-4 months and follows on the heels of similar studies that have been conducted during the FEIS delay on a southern vs. northern alignment for the new bridge and the potential economic impact of the northern alignment on San Francisco's redevelopment plans on YBI.

The hope is that this latest study will lead to closure on the environmental review process and release of the FEIS, so that Caltrans can proceed to acquire permits and right-of-way necessary to build the new bridge. I will continue to keep you posted on developments as they occur.

Enclosure

cc: Denis Mulligan, Caltrans

JAMES W. KELLOGG, Vice Chairman
ROBERT ABERNETHY
JEREMIAH F. HALLIBEY
ROGER A. KOZBERG
ALLEN M. LAWRENCE
ESTEBAN E. TORRES
ROBERT A. WOLF

SENATOR BETTY KARNETTE, Ex Officio
ASSEMBLYMAN TOM TORLAKSON, Ex Officio

ROBERT I. REMEN, Executive Director

STATE OF CALIFORNIA



GRAY DAVIS
GOVERNOR

APR 17 2000

CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

1120 N STREET, MS-52
P. O. BOX 942873
SACRAMENTO, 94273-0001
FAX (916) 653-2134
FAX (916) 654-4364
(916) 654-4245

April 17, 2000

Captain G. J. Buchanan, Captain, CEC, Navy
Commanding Officer
Department of the Navy
Engineering Field Activity West
Naval Facilities Engineering Command
900 Commodore Dr.
San Bruno, CA 94066-5006

Dear Captain Buchanan:

The California Transportation Commission was most disappointed with the Navy's third refusal to meet with the Commission to discuss the Navy's concerns with the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge East Span Seismic Safety Project. This project affects the lives of the drivers and passengers in the 280,000 vehicles that use the bridge on a daily basis. Given the high probability of a major earthquake in the very near future, the priority and importance of this project cannot be overstated. It is difficult for this Commission to understand the Navy's ongoing unwillingness to meet with this Commission in light of the extreme urgency associated with this project.

As the agency responsible for oversight of the Department of Transportation, the Commission continues to believe that it would be highly appropriate for the Navy to meet with the Commission to discuss the Navy's ongoing concerns with the project and the related activities of the Department of Transportation. The need for such a meeting is evident, as the Commission's current understanding of the project history differs significantly from the background set forth in your letter of March 21 and from other public statements made by Navy representatives. The next California Transportation Commission meeting is scheduled for May 10 and May 11, 2000 in Sacramento. Once again we extend an invitation to you and are optimistic that this fourth invitation will be honored. As before, the Commission is willing to accommodate the Navy's schedule. By attending, the Navy would demonstrate to the Commission and to the citizens of California that the Navy cares about public safety at least as much as it cares about its own base closure procedures.

The issues of particular concern to the Commission are as follows:

In your letter you refer to the "inexplicable exclusion of San Francisco from matters in which it has obvious and substantial interests . . ." This statement is not consistent with the facts currently known to the Commission. The record before the Commission demonstrates that San Francisco has been extensively involved in the project. In fact, the City and County of San Francisco was represented on the Metropolitan Transportation Commission Bay Bridge Design Task Force (Task Force). The mission of the Task Force was to develop a regional recommendation on alignment and bridge type for the potential replacement of the East Span. The Task Force consisted of seven members, two of which were representatives of San Francisco (one appointed by the Mayor and one appointed by the Board of

Supervisors). In July of 1997, the Task Force voted to support a northern alignment, and both San Francisco representatives voted in favor of the northern alignment recommendation. This vote occurred after San Francisco developed its Draft Reuse Plan for Naval Station Treasure Island and this vote presumably accounted for any conflicts between the Draft Reuse Plan and the northern alignment.

On July 21, 1997, shortly before the vote, San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown, Jr., sent a letter to the Chair of the Task Force that stated:

"It is my feeling that the economic development opportunities to the Port of Oakland outweigh the economic opportunities to San Francisco at Yerba Buena Island. Even though it will cost more money to build a signature Bridge, I am willing to support the efforts of the majority of this task force to support the northern alignment."

On August 20, 1997, Mayor Brown hosted a celebration on Treasure Island with then-Governor Pete Wilson for the signing of State Senate Bill 60, which established funding for the project, based on the cost of a new bridge on a northern alignment. On September 5, 1997, Mayor Brown sent a letter to the Director of the Department of Transportation in which he confirmed the intent of San Francisco to convey any property on Yerba Buena Island needed for the project to the State at no cost to the State. Mayor Brown sent a concurrent letter to the Governor confirming the commitment made to the Director. San Francisco was placed on the project development team for the project and was invited to all project development team meetings.

In fact, until June of 1998, the project, including detailed and costly final design of the northern alignment, was moving forward with the full support and participation of San Francisco. For reasons that remain unknown to this Commission, San Francisco reversed its position in June of 1998, at which time it took the position that the northern alignment would interfere with San Francisco's reuse plan for Yerba Buena Island. There were no apparent changes to the reuse plan that would have explained this reversal.

Notwithstanding the change in San Francisco's position, the Department of Transportation continued to solicit the participation of San Francisco in the development of the project. San Francisco remained a member of the project development team. San Francisco was also invited to numerous meetings involving historic preservation issues. The Metropolitan Transportation Commission convened a special meeting, at the request of San Francisco, to provide San Francisco with the opportunity to air its concerns (unfortunately, San Francisco did not explain its reversal in position and chose instead to use this valuable opportunity to make seriatim threats of litigation).

Most recently, the White House convened a meeting of the involved federal agencies to address the concerns of San Francisco. As a result of this meeting, a special independent 3rd party study was conducted by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (with the participation and support of the Navy) to assess the merits of the southern alignment (S-1 Modified) engineering analysis conducted by San Francisco. San Francisco has prepared its engineering analysis to bolster its argument that the Department of Transportation had improperly dismissed certain southern alignments due to conflicts with the East Bay Municipal Utility District sewer outfall. The Corps study, released this January, discredited the San Francisco analysis, and found the position of the Department of Transportation to be properly supported with technical analysis. An additional study, also to be carried out by the Army Corps of Engineers within the next two months, will evaluate the most recent attack by San Francisco against the project - that the self-anchored suspension bridge currently under design is unsafe and that it would be safer and more cost-effective to retrofit the existing bridge. The fact that San Francisco's argument is being given such attention, in light of the legions of pre-eminent experts that have validated the safety of the design as well as the cost-effectiveness of replacement, certainly indicates that San Francisco is being given a tremendous opportunity to have its concerns considered.

The level of attention paid to San Francisco in the development of this project is unparalleled in the experience of this Commission. In short, there is an extensive record indicating that San Francisco has been deeply involved in the development of the project at both the policy and design levels. If the Navy has credible evidence to the contrary, this Commission would like to hear it.

Span plan to get 4th once-over

Furious state officials see Willie Brown's fingerprints all over a federal order to reexamine Caltrans' call for a new eastern Bay Bridge

By Lisa Vorderbrueggen
TIMES STAFF WRITER

The Federal Highway Administration has commissioned yet another study of the Bay Bridge, the fourth and what everyone hopes will be the last report on the project.

The Army Corps of Engineers has been asked to assess Caltrans' plan to replace rather than retrofit the 63-year-old eastern span. The request came after a recent visit to the White House by San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown.

Brown, who has been a staunch opponent of replacing the Bay Bridge, will "give great weight" to the results of the study, a spokesman said.

The corps, selected because it is a neutral agency, also will evaluate Caltrans' design for the new bridge.

"If all it does is tell us what we already know, then it will be a waste of money," said Contra Costa County Supervisor Mark DeSaulnier, a member of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. "But if this is what it takes to get the bridge built, then it will be cheap."

Meanwhile, Gov. Gray Davis' top transportation officials sent a scathing letter to the Navy, accusing it of putting bureaucracy and economics before motorists' safety on the seismically vulnerable Bay Bridge.

The nine-member, governor-appointed California Transportation Commission has scolded the Navy before, but its April 17 letter sends the strongest signal yet that state officials are hoping for an end to the skirmish.

California officials say the span, which partially collapsed in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, cannot be retrofitted and must be replaced. Caltrans has already spent \$70 million on design and engineering for a new northern span.

San Francisco, however, wants a retrofit. City officials claim Caltrans' preferred design may not be safe and that northern alignment will damage its plans for Treasure and Yerba Buena islands.

The Navy, which owns the islands, says it must protect historic buildings there and cannot undermine San Francisco's reuse plan.

Mired in delays and controversy since mid-1998, the project is now more than a year behind schedule and more than \$200 million over budget.

Officials fear an earthquake will strike before the new bridge can be built. Nearly 300,000 motorists a day cross the Bay Bridge, the busiest span in California.

This latest study is the fourth such report commissioned in response to special-interest groups or politicians seeking to influence the \$1.5 billion bridge project.

So far, none has resulted in a single change to the bridge design or location.

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission paid \$325,000 last year to find out it would cost \$3 billion to add rail transit to the new bridge.

Caltrans paid a consultant \$70,000 to evaluate the potential impact of a northern alignment on San Francisco's redevelopment plans for Treasure and Yerba Buena islands. The consultant said impact would be minimal.

The Corps of Engineers completed a \$170,000 study in January affirming Caltrans' findings in favor of a northern alignment.

Based in part on these studies, the California Transportation Commission, in its letter, called for the Navy to overrule San Francisco's plan for the islands, saying there is no proof a northern alignment will hurt redevelopment efforts there.

"Public safety should never be a lower priority than unsubstantiated economic benefits," wrote acting Commission Chairman James Kellogg of Concord.

The commission is demanding the Navy appear at its May 10-11 meeting in Sacramento. It is the fourth such invitation. The Navy has declined the last three.

If the Navy again refuses, "we must unfortunately assume that the Navy has decided to risk the lives of thousands of Bay Area residents by allowing the uncertain and narrow economic concerns of San Francisco to dictate the course of this project," Kellogg wrote.

The Navy is preparing a response to the commission's letter and does not know whether it will appear before the commission, Treasure Island Base Closure Manager Ron Plaseied said.

But the Navy takes serious offense to charges that it is endangering the public.

"The Navy always has been and will continue to be concerned about the safety of people using the Bay Bridge," Plaseied said.

The Navy, as well as state and regional officials, are hoping the new Army Corps study will finally blast the political logjam blocking this project.

"We believe this will be the final study on the matter," said Davis spokesman Michael Bustamante. "This analysis should give everyone the confidence to move forward."

If it is the last study, then "maybe it will be worthwhile," said Steve Heminger, deputy director at the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. "We, Caltrans, other parties have looked at every question 20 different ways. It's long past time to build the bridge."

Lisa Vorderbrueggen covers transportation and growth. Reach her at 925-228-6179 or lvorderbrueggen@cctimes.com.